

Message Text

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ACTION EB-07

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E. O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EAIR, FR, UK, US

SUBJ: CIVAIR: CONCORDE

1. AFP REPORTED SECSTATE OF TRANSPORTATION CAVAILLE TOLD PRESS JAN. 26 HE INTENDS MEET SOON WITH HIS BRITISH COLLEAGUE TO DISCUSS FUTURE OF CONCORDE ASSEMBLY LINE ONCE USG DECISION ON CONCORDE IS KNOWN. CONCORDE'S SUCCESS HINGES ON US DECISION, HE SAID.

2. CAVAILLE ADDED, ACCORDING AFP, THAT HE HAD RAISED PROBLEM OF ASSEMBLY LINE AND FUTURE OF CONCORDE PROGRAM SOME SIX MONTHS AGO WITH THE BRITISH AND URGENT SOLUTION WAS NECESSARY. BRITISH ARE THE KEY, HE SAID, SINCE UNDER JOINT PRODUCTION ARRANGEMENTS FOR CONCORDE MANUFACTURE OF PARTS MUST BEGIN IN UK SIX MONTHS EARLIER THAN IN FRANCE.

3. BRUNEAU OF CAVAILLE'S STAFF HAS CONFIRMED TO US ACCURACY OF ABOVE PRESS REPORT BUT ADDED THAT NO LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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FIRM DATE FOR THE MEETING HAS BEEN FIXED. IF USG

DECISION IS NEGATIVE, SAID BRUNEAU, THEN FRENCH AND BRITISH MINISTERS WOULD MEET IMMEDIATELY, BUT IF US DECISION IS FAVORABLE THEN MINISTERS MIGHT NOT MEET BEFORE MARCH.

4. COMMENT: UNTIL NOW THE GOF POSITION, AS OFTEN STATED BY CAVAILLE HIMSELF, HAS BEEN THAT ANY DECISION ON CONTINUATION OF THE CONCORDE PROGRAM MUST AWAIT THE EVIDENCE OF THE MARKETPLACE. IT WOULD CERTAINLY SEEM PREMATURE FOR THE GOF, EVEN FOR SOME MONTHS TO COME, TO COMMIT SUBSTANTIAL RESOURCES TO BUILDING MORE CONCORDES BEFORE KNOWING WHETHER CONCORDE CAN TURN A PROFIT FOR THE CARRIERS AND THERE WOULD IN FACT BE DEMAND FOR ADDITIONAL AIRCRAFT BEYOND THOSE NOW PROGRAMMED, ESPECIALLY SINCE OPTIONS HAVE STILL NOT BEEN PICKED UP ON FIVE AIRCRAFT OF THE FOURTEEN MARKETABLE FROM THE PRODUCTION RUN OF SIXTEEN AIRCRAFT. (THE FIRST TWO PRODUCTION MODELS WERE USED FOR EXTENSIVE TESTING PURPOSES BY FRENCH AND BRITISH AND WILL NOT BE MARKETING.) WE WONDER THEREFORE WHETHER CAVAILLE INITIATIVE MAY STEM ESSENTIALLY FROM CONCERN OVER PROTECTING GOF FLANK DOMESTICALLY AGAINST GROWING DEMANDS FROM FRENCH TRADE UNIONS (AND THE COMMUNISTS)--SEE PARIS 2027--FOR EARLY DECISION ON CONTINUATION OF CONCORDE PROGRAM. IF FRANCO-BRITISH TALKS AT SO EARLY A STAGE ARE INCONCLUSIVE OR PRODUCE BRITISH VETO, THEN CAVAILLE COULD AT LEAST SAY HE TRIED. PERFIDIOUS ALBION COULD BE A VERY CONVENIENT SCAPEGOAT DOMESTICALLY FOR THE GOF.
GAMMON

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